

March 15, 2023

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the Wisconsin Psychological Association regarding Assembly Bill 32. We applaud the Wisconsin State Legislature for attending to the important mental health needs of our state, as evidenced by this proposal to create an individual income tax deduction for certain income earned by an individual from the practice of psychiatry or from providing psychiatric services.

Given the increasing needs for mental health and substance abuse treatment in Wisconsin, supporting mental health practitioners so that we can both attract and retain these professionals is of utmost importance. We noted, however, that this proposal only applies to practitioners who are prescribing medications. **We would like to advocate for Psychologists to be added to the list of practitioners described in the proposed legislation.**

Mental health treatment frequently involves psychological assessment and psychotherapy. Research indicates that the combination of psychotherapy and psychiatric medication provides the most benefit for those struggling with mental health issues. Further, psychotherapy is often the preferred treatment for certain mental health conditions and for specific populations such as children and adolescents, the age group with the highest mental health needs at present. Psychologists have doctoral degrees and receive more training in providing these mental health services than other fields. Waitlists for these services in the community can be 4-6 months and even longer for specialized mental health treatments. Finally, many Psychologists enter the workforce with significant debt due to the many years of education and training they receive in order to provide high quality mental health services.

It is in our best interest as a state to attract and retain as many Psychologists as possible to address the significant mental health treatment gap we are currently experiencing. **Please consider our request to add Psychologists to AB 32.** We would also support adding other types of mental health professions. We, at the Wisconsin Psychological Association, are happy to discuss this further if it would be of interest.

Sincerely,

Kim Skerven, PhD, ABPP

Director, Wisconsin Psychological Association Advocacy Cabinet